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RIYADH PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/FO, IO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [OPDC](#) [OIC](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: OIC SECRETARY GENERAL SEEKS RENEWED COMMUNICATION
WITH USG SENIOR LEADERSHIP, PROPOSING WASHDC-BASED
CONFERENCE TO PROMOTE MUSLIM-WEST DIALOGUE

REF: A. A) SECSTATE 08404
[1](#)B. B) JEDDAH 0044

Classified By: CG Martin R. Quinn for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 1 Post delivered thank you message (ref A) from President Obama to OIC Secretary General Ihsanoglu, who asked for increased communication with USG senior leadership (inviting POTUS to visit OIC) and a renewal of personal communication with Secretary Clinton. OIC seeks USG support for holding a conference in Washington during fall 2009 focused on promoting Muslim dialogue with the West and looks forward to a response to its open letter to the President published in the New York Times and International Herald Tribune on January 21. See action requests, paras 7 and 8. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) THANK YOU LETTER FROM POTUS: CG presented OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu the (unsigned) message from President Obama (ref A) thanking him for the OIC's November 8 congratulatory letter sent after the U.S. election. The delivery of the President's message was announced in the OIC Newsletter on February 1, with accounts in the Arabic and English press. The OIC did not release the text of the message.

[1](#)3. (C) OIC DESIRE FOR HIGH LEVEL USG CONTACT: Accepting the message, the Secretary General expressed his desire to see increased high level contact with the new U.S. Administration. Remarking that the Administration is now in a "honeymoon period," Ihsanoglu stated his desire to invite President Obama to visit the OIC, opining as well that the best overseas platform for a POTUS message to the Muslim World would be "from a democratic Muslim country" -- a likely reference to his native Turkey. Expressing strongly positive views on the January 26 Al-Arabiya interview with the President, Ihsanoglu said he hoped to have an opportunity to speak personally by phone with Secretary Clinton in the near future. Ihsanoglu mentioned having first met Mrs. Clinton and her daughter during a 1996 visit to the Yildiz Palace in Istanbul, indicating that they had remained in occasional contact.

[1](#)4. (C) SPECIAL ENVOY ROLE: Ihsanoglu cited the benefits of having a US Special Envoy to the OIC, emphasizing the need for the US envoy to be a Muslim with close ties to the White House. The SYG commended the "positive energy" generated by the previous Special Envoy (Mr. Sada Cumber) during his eight months of service and expressed his hope to see the position continued.

[1](#)5. (C) GAZA COOPERATION: Ihsanoglu called for the United States to play a role in peace-making and confidence-building with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. In response to the CG's noting the extent of humanitarian assistance

provided by the US to the people of Gaza, Ihsanoglu recalled the cooperative efforts that the OIC has engaged in with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other countries to channel humanitarian relief.

¶6. (C) COOPERATION FRAMEWORK ON HEALTH: The cooperation framework agreement on maternal and child health (signed December 1, 2008) was briefly discussed along with plans for follow-up via telcon between interlocutors at IO/USAID and OIC.

¶7. (C) ACTION REQUEST -- ISLAM-WEST DIALOGUE/CONFERENCE IN 2009: Special Advisor to the OIC Ufuk Gokcen mentioned that the OIC seeks USG cooperation in organizing a "high level" conference during fall 2009 in Washington on the overall issue of Muslim dialogue with the West. Gokcen noted that in earlier conversation with the former Special Envoy, the prospect was raised that a conference might be organized in cooperation with the United States Institute for Peace (USIP). Post requests Department response/guidance on whether organizing such a Washington based-conference is a feasible prospect.

¶8. (C) ACTION REQUEST -- RESPONSE TO OIC OPEN LETTER: OIC's decision to place an open letter to President Obama in the New York Times and International Herald Tribune(ref B) indicates its strong desire to continue engagement with the USG. Although OIC did not transmit the letter through official diplomatic channels, Secretary General Ihsanoglu indicated that a specific response from the White House or Department would be welcomed.
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